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TESTIMONY OF MANUEL dos MARTIRES
AT A JOINT HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS BRIEFING
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
May 4, 1999

My original name is Paulino Piedade Cachola. I was born in Dili, January 1, 1968. When I decided to work as a civil servant at the East Timor military provincial office (Korem 164/Wira Dharma), I had to change my identity because I came from a family who joined the Fretilin party. If I did not change my identity I would not be accepted to work as a civil servant. I enrolled in that office as Manuel dos Martires, who was born in Dili, June 16, 1968. I am the seventh child of nine brothers. Since I was in elementary school I had been helping my parents to supply logistics and medicine for my brothers who joined the East Timorese Armed Resistance (FALINTIL), or other people in the jungle.

I began to work at the military provincial office since December 1, 1987 until I left East Timor on December 10, 1998. I applied for the job with an intention to smuggle out as many data about the Indonesian Military (TNI) as possible. Fortunately, I was able to get a position as a computer operator at the Personnel Department. My work had allowed me to achieve my desired mission, i.e. retrieving information about the TNI from the computer and to transfer those information to the Falintil and journalists. Thus, I came to know the fact about the real strength of the Indonesian military in East Timor. I was also able to find out that the TNI and the Indonesian government all along had manipulated the data to be released with regards to the actual number of troops on the ground and had been lying to the international world about this particular fact.

All this time the TNI and the Indonesian government always said that the number of troops in East Timor only 6,000 - 10,000. On the contrary, from the data I traced through my computer at the Personnel Department of the Korem 164/Wira Dharma, I found out that the number reached 21,658 people. This number only showed the troops officially registered in the government document. Besides these "official troops", there are the "unofficial" ones (the wild troops) which amounted to 11,000 people (I acquired this data from a special record kept at the Operational and Intelligence Department in my previous office and from the Tribuana Intelligence Task Force office). Until now the Indonesian troops are still coming both by Hercules plane owned by TNI every Fridays, and by the commercial ships Dobonsolo and Awu, where the troops disguise themselves as ordinary passengers. The number of troops who regularly come might be small, but they continuously arrive from the airport, seaport or from West Timor.

Recently the TNI generals have claimed that there is a civil war in East Timor. My experience as an East Timorese can not believe this. Since the Indonesian invasion in 1975 it was the TNI which created a civil war in East Timor by forcing people to kill each other or by coercing people to become informants. People can not always reject this type of coercion because the TNI often threaten to kill them if the people do not want to follow their orders. In other cases, the TNI officials will offer some money to those who are unemployed and poor if they are willing to work for the Indonesian military. They also promise these people that they will become the local leaders if East Timor remains to be part of Indonesia.

Indonesian government claims that the majority of East Timorese want integration with Indonesia. Therefore, a referendum will only cause civil war. I don't think this is true. Indonesian government is telling lies again. As it was clear from the cases of Liquica and Dili massacres, and

also in other places, the members of the paramilitary groups received about US$ 30 per month and weapon to attack the civilians. Worse than this, the military drugged the militia in order to make them very aggressive and eager to kill innocent people mercilessly. Whenever atrocious incident happens, the Indonesian military was behind the paramilitary. Some of them in the plain clothes merged within the paramilitary.

I dare to speak here in front of you because I consider the US as the most powerful country in the world, which can assert its influence on countries which continuously commits human rights violations. It is publicly known that the Indonesian military terrorize, intimidate, rape and kill people in East Timor. According to me this knowledge is enough to make the US government to exert pressure on Indonesian military to stop its human rights abuses and let the East Timorese enjoy their rights to self-determination. To me there is no other way but the TNI has to get out of my motherland and allow us to choose what is best for us, i.e. referendum toward independence!

Our suffering for 23 years of Indonesian occupation is great enough. One third (more than 200,000) of our people has died because of Indonesian military brutal acts. People lost their parents, brothers and sisters, and they cannot live in peace because of the terror and intimidation. My family also experiences many sufferings as a result of this prolonged occupation. After Indonesian invasion in December 1975 and fight the Fretilin, three of my brothers joined the guerilla in the jungle. My first brother, Carlos Cachola, died after being shot by the TNI. Then my second brother, Domingos Cachola, disappeared, and I don't know whether he is still alive or dead in the jungle. My third brother, Joao Piedade Cachola, was arrested during a clash with the Indonesian army and he is alive. I also lost hundreds of friends and close relatives who got killed and kidnapped by the military.

For 24 years Indonesia claims to have developed East Timor. This development, however, is not for the people. Only certain minority likes the leaders of the pro-integration groups and Indonesian people themselves who enjoy this development.

At last, in this opportunity I would like the US government to stop violence in East Timor by doing the following:

a. Pressure the Indonesian government and its military to withdraw its troops from East Timor.
b. Suspend any joint programs with the military and stop supplying military spare parts to Indonesia
c. Urge the Indonesian government and its military to disarm the paramilitary and stop the distribution of weapons to the paramilitary.
d. Send the UN Peacekeeping troops to East Timor before the holding of the ballot in August.

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